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**ROJ NO:** MINR-2009-03823 **AGENCY:** NIFA MINW

**ROJ TYPE:** OTHER GRANTS **PROJ STATUS:** TERMINATED

**CONTRACT/GRANT/AGREEMENT NO:** 2009-49400-05898 **PROPOSAL NO:** 2009-03823

**START:** 01 SEP 2009 **TERM:** 31 AUG 2012

**GRANT AMT:** \$506,170 **GRANT YR:** 2009

**INITIAL AWARD YEAR:** 2009

**INVESTIGATOR:** Stokes,S,E

**PERFORMING INSTITUTION:**

ARMER'S LEGAL ACTION GROUP

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T. PAUL, MINNESOTA 55101-1589

***SUCCESSFUL BEGINNINGS: LEGAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR MINNESOTA'S PROMISING BEGINNING AND IMMIGRANT FARMERS***

**NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY:** Many of Minnesota's newest family farmers are coming from the state's largest immigrant or minority groups, especially the Hmong near the Twin Cities metro area, who immigrated to this region by the thousands from Southeast Asia over the last 20 years. Many of these new Americans aspire to reclaim their traditions in farming. Hmong people have in fact become the region's most prominent new farmers: for example, about 50 of 150 vendors at the Saint Paul Farmers' Market are Hmong farming families, selling fruits, vegetables, roots, herbs, flowers, and highly specialized varieties of traditional crops. Hundreds more Hmong farmers sell at markets across the state. The precariousness of these farmers' lives was made clear on July 10, 2008, when a violent storm tore through Dakota County south of the Twin Cities, where as many as a hundred Hmong farmers, most of them from Saint Paul, were raising vegetables and flowers. Many of them lost their entire crop, which was to be a large portion of their families' incomes. It appears that none of the farmers had crop insurance, or even knew of its existence. We expect the results of this project to be a significant step toward success for scores of Minnesota's beginning and immigrant farmers, with FLAG and our collaborators reaching new communities and providing deeper and more meaningful support for the populations that already know us.

**OBJECTIVES:** The long-term goal of Successful Beginnings: Legal and Technical Support for Minnesota's Promising Beginning and Immigrant Farmers is to stabilize and expand the population of socially disadvantaged and limited resource beginning farmers who have the knowledge to make the informed decisions necessary to successfully own and operate family farms. The immigrant farming communities included in this project are struggling, to varying degrees, to participate in USDA programs and stay on their land. FLAG requests a multi-year grant because training farmers, especially beginning farmers, is not a short-term endeavor, if only because so many federal farm programs, such as NAP crop insurance or FSA farm ownership loans, require three years of records. Many of these farmers are unfamiliar with the types of recordkeeping requirements and/or have language barriers that will require intense, one-on-one assistance for several years to help them acquire the skills and information they will need to succeed.

**APPROACH:** FLAG and our collaborative partners will combine outreach, education, and training programs to address the educational needs regarding federal agricultural programs of immigrant and beginning farmers in Minnesota, especially those programs on risk management and the acquisition and management of credit. FLAG will research, write, update, and translate, if necessary, accessible educational materials to address the limited resource and socially disadvantaged beginning farmers' needs, and distribute these materials in conjunction with our collaborating partners. FLAG will also make presentations opportunistically at workshops for farmers and staff members working with farmers organized by our collaborating partners and others; and provide one-on-one technical assistance to individual farmers who need assistance in accessing federal programs that can help them stabilize their operations. In recent years, FLAG invested considerably in

s ability to serve the growing number of immigrant farmers who have so energized local farmers' markets. FLAG hired and trained a Hmong-speaking community outreach liaison who has conducted significant outreach to the Hmong community in Minnesota; produced numerous publications that have been translated into Hmong (and some into Spanish); provided education and training to Hmong and other immigrant farmers; and worked intensively with individual immigrant farmers to help them prepare insurance and loan applications, and understand farmers' market contracts. FLAG's Successful Beginnings: Legal and Technical Support for Minnesota's Promising Beginning and Immigrant Farmers program will build on that investment and provide a significant opportunity to improve the participation in federal programs and the immediate and long-term farming lives of specific geographic communities of socially disadvantaged beginning farm families. FLAG and our collaborating organizations will use culturally competent education, training, and individual farmer support to improve access to and equitable participation in USDA's agriculture programs, such as Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE), crop insurance, Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Farm Ownership Loans, and Farm Operating Loans, all to promote the ownership and operation of thriving farm enterprises.

**PROGRESS:** 2009/09 TO 2012/08

**OUTPUTS:** Planning, logistics, training for the 5th, 6th, and 7th Immigrant and Minority Farmer Conferences (St. Paul, MN) with more than 800 attendees, about 90 percent of whom were beginning farmers; most of the Hmong American farmers were recruited and transported to the conferences by project partner AAHWM. More than 175 farmers attended FLAG workshops on owning and leasing farm land, and farmers' market rules. Held at least 50 meetings with AAHWM; addressed issues facing immigrant and beginning farmers; trained AAHWM staff on USDA programs and farm management. Conducted more than 65 individual and group training sessions with more than 800 beginning and immigrant farmers (some farmers attending more than one) about preparation and application for federal programs, leasing land, marketing, and risk management. Project staff created or facilitated more than 12 new direct market opportunities to help diversify immigrant farmers' marketing, with assistance on new schedules, pricing, packaging, and invoicing; and connected 33 mostly beginning farmers to 7 new farmers' markets. Other farmers used market diversification training on their own: 23 percent of our surveyed farmers said they had found new markets from this training. Conducted research on labor and employment laws re: farm internship programs. Advised individual beginning CSA farmers on laws and provided information to partner LSP for its Beginning Farmer Program; and led 4 workshops on labor and local foods law in St. Joseph, St. Cloud and Winona, MN, for a total of 128 beginning farmers through MN Dept of Ag, Sustainable Farming Assn and partner LSP. An internship guide is in progress; publication of a farm labor and employment guide targeted to immigrant farmers is complete. Conducted outreach and provided counsel and assistance at 15 farmers' markets vendor meetings, with more than 700 mostly beginning farmers over 3 years (some who sell at more than one market and some who received services in more than one year). Worked with 6 MN FSA offices to increase beginning and immigrant farmer participation in NAP. Conducted 20 NAP workshops for 176 farmers with FSA and AAHWM staff; continued outreach and one-on-one work with farmers and partner organizations on NAP deadlines and procedures; created new forms to address land tenancy issues. Provided legal representation to more than 70 beginning and immigrant farmers on 3 farm sites whose livelihoods were threatened by criminal acts or unfair official actions. Produced a new farm recordkeeping template, vital for participation in federal programs, and included recordkeeping training in Hmong language in at least 41 sessions attended by more than 200 immigrant farmers. Provided advice and information to beginning farmers re: licensing, contracts, loan servicing, income tax preparation, pricing at farmers' markets, composting, pest management, RCS grants, and more. Overall: Provided outreach, technical and legal assistance, training, education, and cultural and language interpretation in individual sessions and in workshops attended by more than 800 immigrant and beginning farmers. Total numbers include individuals who attended multiple events. **PARTICIPANTS:** Susan E. Stokes (Project Director) a practicing attorney and FLAG's Executive Director. She has overseen FLAG's outreach to beginning farmers, helping them understand their legal rights and obligations in leases and contracts, and connecting them to federal programs that

to improve profitability. Susan represented 44 immigrant farmers and obtained a civil restraining order when some of them were threatened by a neighbor with a loaded rifle; and she helped others with discrimination claims against a major metropolitan farmers' market. Susan helped plan the Immigrant and Minority Farmers Conferences and co-presented a workshop on leasing farm land; worked on securing access to farm land for beginning and immigrant farmers; and helped facilitate several new direct marketing relationships. Susan was recently honored by the Minnesota Justice Foundation for her excellence in providing legal services to immigrant farmers. Hli Xyooj (Principal Investigator) is a staff attorney and Hmong outreach liaison. She has been responsible for FLAG's outreach to the beginning Hmong American farming community; helped plan several Immigrant and Minority Farmers' Conferences and co-presented a workshop on farmers' market rules; created marketing profiles and helped broker new direct marketing relationships; conducted workshops in Hmong on NAP and recordkeeping; trained AAHWM staff in Hmong on federal farm programs; drove to farmers' homes and farm land and helped them keep records and apply for NAP; drove Hmong American farmers to FSA to assist them in applying for NAP and an FSA loan, and acted as a bridge between these beginning farmers and FSA. Hli did all this bilingually, providing much-needed Hmong language assistance and cultural competence.

**Partner Organizations/Collaborators:** The Association for the Advancement of Hmong Women in Minnesota (AAHWM) provides cultural services, education, and advocacy to address the evolving needs of Hmong American women and their families. AAHWM staff, including its Executive Director, Ly Vang, did much of the day-to-day communicating with the immigrant farmers served by this project; hosted most of the training sessions at AAHWM's office; provided the culturally and linguistically tailored communications to connect the farmers to the services described above, often driving the farmers to their destinations; assisted with recordkeeping with on-farm individual assistance; and assisted with the evaluation of the work. Land Stewardship Project (LSP) is a private, nonprofit organization founded in 1982 to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, to promote sustainable agriculture, and to develop sustainable communities. LSP has connected beginning farmers with FLAG in order to help them get labor and employment advice and to represent direct marketers as they negotiate regulatory and licensing bureaucracies.

**TARGET AUDIENCES:** Our target audience is difficult to quantify. We do not have a cohort training program; we provide education, workshops, and individual instruction on a wide range of issues to immigrant and beginning farmers with whom we and our partners have relationships. We work with some 200 farmers at any given time. The farmers FLAG served under this grant over the past three years have been mostly, but not exclusively, immigrant and refugee farmers, most of them Hmong American (of whom a substantial majority are beginning farmers), most of them (about 80%) women, and nearly all low-income. Because of the skills of FLAG and AAHWM staff--language, cultural, farming, and legal skills--we were able to provide all of our services in a culturally and linguistically tailored way. Many of the workshops and the individual assistance were provided in Hmong (not in English and then interpreted into Hmong). FLAG and AAHWM spent considerable time developing surveys that would evaluate overall knowledge gained by the Hmong farmers served; specific information learned; and specific changes they made to their farming operations. The challenge: Most were low-income and non-English-speaking, or spoke English as a second language. Many farmers were not literate in any language. Formal surveys or evaluations were difficult to complete. Thus, all surveys had to be conducted verbally and in Hmong. Evaluation sessions were conducted in small groups and individually with both FLAG and AAHWM staff reading through the questions (which were written in English). Bilingual FLAG and AAHWM staff provided interpretation. We have found that general interpreters typically are unable to provide competent interpretation because they lack specialized knowledge of farming, farm practices, farm programs, and the law. Bilingual and culturally qualified AAHWM and FLAG staff conducted all of the surveys to ensure consistency. Many beginning farmers in our program have other employment, so most evaluation sessions were conducted during evenings when farmers were finished with their day jobs. We were able to get complete survey responses from 43 farmers. Of those, 22 answered additional questions regarding land access and market diversification. 35 survey forms were not tabulated for various reasons, including that we could not verify if they were duplicative, were conducted by a different staff person who had not been at the other evaluation sessions, or were incomplete. The broad array of education and assistance described

bove, provided in a linguistically and culturally tailored way and in collaboration with our partners, allowed us to effectively serve hundreds of beginning and immigrant farmers. PROJECT MODIFICATIONS: This project is now complete.

**IMPACT: 2009/09 TO 2012/08**

Change in knowledge: 88% of immigrant farmers who responded to a survey said they will adopt new practices in recordkeeping, insurance, and on-farm food safety as a result of our training and assistance. 91% said they now know how to get help with land access and understand tenants' rights and obligations. 92% are more likely to keep farming. 88% believe they will earn more profit. Change in action: 85% of responding farmers said they changed farming practices based on knowledge gained; 60% began recording production activities; 40% began recording market activities. Change in conditions: Minnesota FSA director and county officials sought FLAG's input to improve services to immigrant farmers and implemented our suggestions. Change in knowledge: With training and assistance, more than 375 immigrant farmers learned about NAP, their local FSA office location, and recordkeeping skills for FSA programs. Change in actions: With new knowledge and conditions above, at least 39 immigrant farmers applied to 6 MN FSA county offices for NAP coverage. Change in conditions: Land access. Found land for 201 immigrant farmers on more than 170 acres in Twin Cities region. 81% of survey respondents said they found farm land to rent and received help with their lease. 55% signed a written lease. Lease terms were 1-3 years. Change in conditions: Access to credit. With our input, MDA and AgStar Financial Services created microloan programs for immigrant and beginning farmers that accommodate unconventional credit histories. (AgStar official: "We could not have begun our program and process without FLAG."); assisted 7 farm families with loan applications; one purchased a rototiller and trailer. FLAG submitted comments on a proposed FSA microloan program. Change in conditions: Market diversification. Trained and connected immigrant farmers to at least 8 new direct market relationships; 33 mostly beginning farmers were connected to new farmers' markets. The income of survey respondents with new markets increased between 10-20%. Change in knowledge: 100% of responding non-farming participants said they felt more informed and better prepared to begin farming. Program's original quantifiable goals: Train at least 25 farmers on risk management and loan programs each year. [Completed] Distribute educational materials on credit and risk management to at least 100 farmers. [Completed] Assist 5-10 new farmers each year in filing their crop insurance reports with FSA to become eligible for risk management programs. [Completed] Assist at least 10 farmers through 2- to 18-month process of applying for disaster relief under 2008 Farm Bill. [Completed] Assist 15 farmers with risk management or loan applications or some other appropriate risk management tool. [Completed] Create tenants' rights and obligations legal educational materials. [Completed] Provide training and information to at least 25 farmers each year on tenants' rights and obligations. [Completed] Distribute educational materials on tenants' rights and obligations to at least 100 farmers. [Completed] Contribute to capacity-building of AAHWM by providing legal and technical training and support to staff. [Completed]

**PUBLICATIONS (not previously reported): 2009/09 TO 2012/08**

- . Heyman, Amanda and Jambor-Delgado, Jennifer. 2012. Farmers Guide to Farm Employees: Federal and Minnesota Labor and Employment Law for Small-Scale Family Farms. See: <http://www.flaginc.org/topics/pubs/MILEguide.pdf>.
- . Stokes, Susan E. 2012. FLAG testifies before the Agriculture and Rural Economics Committee on Immigrant and Minority Microloan Program at Senate Committee on Agriculture and Rural Economics Meeting Minutes. See: [http://www.senate.leg.state.mn.us/schedule/hearing\\_minutes.phpls=87&hearing\\_id=7038&type=minutes](http://www.senate.leg.state.mn.us/schedule/hearing_minutes.phpls=87&hearing_id=7038&type=minutes).
- . Stokes, Susan E. 2010. Selling Directly to Schools: Tips for Farmers. See: [http://www.flaginc.org/topics/pubs/arts/Farm2School\\_20100727.pdf](http://www.flaginc.org/topics/pubs/arts/Farm2School_20100727.pdf).
- . Xyooj, Hli. 2010,2011,2012. Deadlines for Minnesota Farmers to Sign Up for NAP (Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance) Program. See: <http://www.flaginc.org/topics/pubs/arts/2012NAPappDeadline.pdf>.
- . Xyooj, Hli. 2012. Recordkeeping Instructions and Templates for Small-Scale Fruit and Vegetable Growers. See: [http://www.flaginc.org/topics/pubs/recordkeeping/RecordkeepingToolkit\\_2012.pdf](http://www.flaginc.org/topics/pubs/recordkeeping/RecordkeepingToolkit_2012.pdf).
- . Xyooj, Hli. 2012. Post-Harvest Handling and Packing Suggestions (available upon request).

- . Xyooj, Hli. 2012. Farm Information Sheet form (available upon request).
- . Xyooj, Hli (with partner). 2012. Working One-on-One with Farmers in Direct Marketing and Selling of Their Fruits and vegetables, training outline (available upon request).
- . Xyooj, Hli (translation). 2012. Selling Your Products, Level I. See: <http://www.flaginc.org/topics/pubs/arts/SellYourProducts1 Hmong.pdf> (Hmong translation); and (with partner) <http://www.flaginc.org/topics/pubs/arts/SellYourProducts1 English.pdf> (English version).
- 0. Xyooj, Hli. 2012. Order Form for Fresh Local Vegetables from Your Local Farmer template (available upon request).
- 1. Xyooj, Hli (with partner). 2011. Do you want to join the growing number of chefs who buy fresh food from local farmer for restaurants (available upon request).
- 2. Xyooj, Hli. 2011. We are your local farmers, customized farmer profile templates describing farmers background, contact information, and fresh produce available during growing season (available upon request).
- 3. Xyooj, Hli (with partners). 2012. Harvesting Healthier Food: Safe Food Handling Practices for Hmong Farmers. See: <http://www.flaginc.org/topics/pubs/arts/2012 HFHL Summit.pdf>.
- 4. Xyooj, Hli (with partners). 2012. On-Farm Food Safety Reminders poster. See: <http://www.flaginc.org/topics/pubs/arts/HmongFS Poster.pdf>.
- 5. Xyooj, Hli (with partners). 2012. Harvesting Healthier Food: A Program of Safe Food Handling Practices for Immigrant farmers flyer. See: <http://www.flaginc.org/topics/news/20120223HHFhalf.pdf>.
- 6. Xyooj, Hli (with partners). 2012. Starting Points: Food Safety Practices for Vegetable and Fruit Growers guide (available upon request).

**PROGRESS:** 2010/09/01 TO 2011/08/31

All outputs listed below apply to beginning farmers: Planning, logistics, training for 6th Immigrant and Minority Farmer conference (St. Paul, MN). 253 attendees (156 farmers), mostly beginning and immigrant farmers. 87 farmers attended LAG workshops on owning and leasing farmland, and farmers?? market rules. Held 25+ meetings with partner AAHWM; addressed issues facing Hmong beginning farmers, trained AAHWM staff on USDA risk management programs. With AAHWM, MN Farmers Union, The Minnesota Project, and MN Dept. of Ag, assisted farmers?? search for scarce farmland near homes and markets; found landowners who provided farmland for 109 Hmong farmers on 145 acres in Eagan, St. Paul, Rosemount, Inver Grove Heights, and South Haven; 139 Hmong, Karen and Bhutanese farmers on 2012 waiting list for land. Created or facilitated 7 new direct market opportunities to help Hmong farmers diversify their marketing. Provided technical assistance to prepare farmers for new marketing, helping them learn to price and package differently, create invoices and marketing profiles, meet buyers?? needs and schedules. Worked with 4 MN FSA offices to increase Hmong farmers?? participation in NAP. Conducted NAP workshop for 25 farmers with Wright County FSA. and one with AAHWM for 18 farmers; continued outreach and one-on-one work with Hmong farmers and partner organizations on NAP deadlines and procedures; provided transportation and translations; created new forms to address land tenancy issues; helped 12 Hmong farmers apply for NAP (9 farmers filed). Completed representation of 44 Hmong, mostly beginning, farmers in Eagan, MN, after neighbor made threats with loaded shotgun. Worked with prosecutors to ensure felony charges; reviewed rights and safety protocols with farmers; and arranged police patrols. Organized Hmong and Catholic healing ceremony with defendant who pleaded guilty to gross misdemeanor and agreed to probationary conditions. Obtained 2-year civil restraining order for all 44 farmers. Conducted research on labor and employment laws re: farm internship programs. Advised individual beginning CSA farmers on laws and provided information to partner LSP for its beginning Farmer Program. Revised and piloted new draft farm recordkeeping templates, vital for participation in federal programs. Conducted 4 recordkeeping workshops in Hmong. Provided brief advice and information to beginning farmers re: contracts, loan servicing, income tax preparation, pricing at farmers?? markets, composting, pest management, NRCS grants, and more. In outreach to farmers?? market vendors; attended vendor meetings at 10+ farmers?? markets; connected 33 Hmong farmers with 7 new markets and 128 farmers to existing markets; helped Hmong farmers improve

all assignments and understand market grievance procedures. Hosted liability insurance workshop on requirements for market participation; connected farmers with insurance agent; referred several farmers to other insurance sources and partner organizations. Assisted farmer in navigating state agencies that gave her inconsistent advice on a direct marketing license; helped urban farmers with legal issues on leases, zoning, and more.

**IMPACT:** 2010/09/01 TO 2011/08/31

provided outreach, technical assistance, training, publications, counsel, translations, and transportation to 300+ immigrant farmers (70% beginning farmers). NOTE: All items listed below apply to beginning farmers: Change in knowledge: Taught hundreds of farmers, individually and in groups ?? including 15 training sessions with 277 farmers ?? about preparation and application for federal programs, leasing farmland, marketing options, and risk management strategies. Change in knowledge: Several farmers now better understand and address risk management after receiving legal assistance with leases, zoning, and labor and employment issues. Change in action: At least 7 Hmong farmers are registered at Wright, Sherburne, and Dakota County FSA offices and eligible for NAP payments to compensate for farm losses (1 recovered for 2010 losses; 3 will recover for 2011 losses). Change in action: FLAG helped a Hmong farmer apply for and get a \$40,000 FS operating loan; helped him collect and organize farm records; and provided language and cultural bridge with FSA. Change in conditions: Reflecting new potential, Hmong farmers are selling fresh vegetables directly to at least 7 new markets (MN institutional buyers): Hastings school district purchased 2 deliveries of produce from a Hmong farmer (85 lbs. vegetables, 10 lbs. tomatoes); St. Paul restaurants bought supplies of Hmong greens, herbs, and winter squashes; a Hmong family sold vegetables to Univ. of St. Thomas; another provided 224 lbs. vegetables and cooking lessons to Macalester College. Change in knowledge, actions, and conditions: With FLAG??s outreach and training, a Wright County Hmong farm family now keeps USDA-ready records; applied for NAP coverage; received NAP payment after storm damage; obtained refund from land owner after learning how to measure land; and is now teaching other farmers about USDA programs. Change in conditions: Because of FLAG??s outreach work in Eagan, MN, area??s farmers are safer and less isolated from the community after farmers were threatened by a local resident. Program??s original quantifiable goals (all items apply to beginning farmers): Train at least 25 farmers on risk management and loan programs each year. [Completed through year 1.] Distribute educational materials on credit and risk management to at least 100 farmers. [Completed.] Assist 5-10 new farmers each year in filing their crop acreage reports with FSA to become eligible for risk management programs. [Completed through year 2.] Assist at least 10 farmers through 12- to 18-month process of applying for disaster relief under 2008 Farm Bill. [Complete.] Assist 15 farmers with risk management or loan applications or some other appropriate risk management tool. [Completed.] Create tenants?? rights and obligations legal educational materials. [Completed.] Provide training and information to at least 25 farmers each year on tenants?? rights and obligations. [Ahead of schedule through year 2.] Distribute educational materials on tenants?? rights and obligations to at least 100 farmers. [Completed.] Contribute to capacity-building of AAHWM by providing legal and technical training and support to staff. [Completed/ongoing.]

**PUBLICATIONS:** 2010/09/01 TO 2011/08/31

- . Krueger, Jill E. 2010. Fall Deadlines for Minnesota Farmers to Sign Up for NAP (Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance) Program
- . Xyooj, Hli. 2011. Deadlines for Minnesota Farmers to Sign Up for NAP (Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance) Program
- okes, Susan E. 2011. A new PowerPoint presentation for a workshop attended by approximately 47 immigrant and minority farmers highlighting legal and risk management aspects of leasing farmland; 45 more people downloaded copies from the FLAG website during the grant period.
- . Stokes, Susan E. 2011. A new PowerPoint presentation for a workshop attended by approximately 47 immigrant and minority farmers highlighting legal and risk management aspects of leasing farmland; 45 more people downloaded copies from the FLAG website during the grant period.

**PROGRESS:** 2010/09/01 TO 2011/08/31

OUTPUTS: All outputs listed below apply to beginning farmers: Planning, logistics, training for 6th Immigrant and Minority Farmer Conference (St. Paul, MN). 253 attendees (156 farmers), mostly beginning and immigrant farmers. 87 farmers attended FLAG workshops on owning and leasing farmland, and farmers' market rules. Held 25+ meetings with partner AAHWM; addressed issues facing Hmong beginning farmers, trained AAHWM staff on USDA risk management programs. With AAHWM, MN Farmers Union, The Minnesota Project, and MN Dept. of Ag, assisted farmers in search for scarce farmland near homes and farmers' markets; found landowners who provided farmland for 70+ Hmong farmers (12 in Eagan; 10 in St. Paul; 4 in Rosemount; 39 in Inver Grove Heights; and at least 5 in South Haven). Created or facilitated new direct market opportunities to help Hmong farmers diversify their marketing. Provided technical assistance to prepare farmers for new marketing, helping them learn to price and package differently, create invoices and marketing profiles, meet buyers' needs and schedules. Worked with 4 MN FSA offices to increase Hmong farmers' participation in NAP. Conducted NAP workshop for 25 farmers with Wright County FSA. and one with AAHWM for 18 farmers; continued outreach and one-on-one work with Hmong farmers and partner organizations on NAP deadlines and procedures; provide transportation and translations; created new forms to address land tenancy issues; helped 12 Hmong farmers apply for NAP (9 farmers filed). Completed representation of 44 Hmong, mostly beginning, farmers in Eagan, MN, after neighbor made threats with loaded shotgun. Worked with prosecutors to ensure felony charges; reviewed rights and safety protocols with farmers; and arranged police patrols. Organized Hmong and Catholic healing ceremony with defendant before he pleaded guilty to gross misdemeanor and agreed to probationary conditions. Obtained 2-year civil restraining order for all 44 farmers. Conducted research on labor and employment laws re: farm internship programs. Advised individual beginning CSA farmers on laws and provided information to partner LSP for its Beginning Farmer Program. Revised, simplified, and piloted several new draft farm recordkeeping templates, vital for participation in federal programs. Conducted 4 recordkeeping workshops in Hmong. Provided brief advice and information to beginning farmers re: contracts, loan servicing, income tax preparation, pricing at farmers' markets, composting, pest management, NRCS grants and more. Continued outreach to local farmers' market vendors; attended vendor and registration meetings at 10+ farmers' market events; assisted several Hmong farmers to obtain better stall assignments and understand market grievance procedures. Hosted liability insurance workshop on requirements for market participation; connected farmers with local insurance agent; referred several farmers to different insurance sources and partner organizations. Assisted farmer in navigating state agencies that gave her inconsistent advice about her direct marketing license; helped urban farmers with legal questions re: leases, zoning, and more. PARTICIPANTS: Susan E. Stokes (Project Director) is a practicing attorney and FLAG's Executive Director. She has overseen FLAG's outreach to Hmong and other immigrant farmers, helping them to understand their legal rights and obligations in leases and contracts, and connecting them to federal programs that can help them become more profitable. Susan represented 44 Hmong American farmers who obtained a civil restraining order when some of them were threatened by a neighbor with a loaded rifle, and has helped others with discrimination claims against a major metropolitan farmers' market. She also helped plan the Sixth Immigrant and Minority Farmers Conference; presented at a workshop on leasing farmland; worked on securing access to farmland for immigrant farmers; and helped facilitate new direct marketing relationships. Hli Xyooj (Principal Investigator) is a staff attorney and Hmong outreach liaison. She has been responsible for FLAG's outreach to the Hmong farming community; helped plan the Immigrant and Minority Farmers' Conference and presented at a workshop on farmers' market rules; created marketing profiles and helped broker new direct marketing relationships; conducted workshops in Hmong on NAP and recordkeeping. Trained AAHWM staff in Hmong on federal farm programs; drove to farmers' homes and farmland and helped them keep records and apply for NAP; drove Hmong farmers to FSA to apply for NAP and an FSA loan, and acted as a bridge between the farmers and FSA. Hli did all this bilingually, providing much-needed Hmong language assistance and cultural competence. Jennifer Jambor-Delgado (FLAG staff attorney) conducted research on labor and employment laws regarding farm internships and represented direct marketers in interfacing with state agencies. Partner Organizations/Collaborators: The Association for the Advancement of Hmong Women in Minnesota (AAHWM) provides cultural services, education, and

advocacy to address the evolving needs of Hmong women and their families. Today, the 30-year-old organization, based in St. Paul, Minnesota, helps families that are reclaiming their farming traditions. With this funding, AAHWM has added farm staff that FLAG has trained. AAHWM staff work closely with Hmong farmers and organize workshops. Land Stewardship Project (LSP) is a private, nonprofit organization founded in 1982 to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, to promote sustainable agriculture, and to develop sustainable communities. LSP has connected beginning farmers with FLAG in order to help them get labor and employment advice and to represent direct marketers as they negotiate regulatory and licensing bureaucracies. Minnesota Food Association (MFA) was incorporated in 1981 to form a coalition of informed, connected, and activated urban and rural people to build a more sustainable food system. MFA's Big River Farms CSA is a training farm for immigrant farmers. MFA has taken the lead on organizing the Immigrant and Minority Farmer conferences in Minnesota. Training and professional development: This grant is supporting a new capacity-building position, Farm Coordinator, at AAHWM through FLAG's training and technical assistance. TARGET AUDIENCES: In the grant period, FLAG once again used formal education programs, workshops, and individual instruction and outreach to change and improve the knowledge, actions, and circumstances for a wide range of beginning and immigrant farmers. The vast majority of farmers FLAG has served over the past year have been immigrant, beginning, female farmers. One valuable insight into the demography of this work's target audience remains the annual Immigrant and Minority Farmer conference, the sixth edition of which convened in St. Paul, Minnesota, last February. According to a survey of the conference participants (which confirms the wider experience of FLAG's staff), most participants were Hmong, followed by Hmong, Vietnamese, Karen, African, Caucasian, and Latino; a majority were women; and there were many repeat participants from the 2010 conference when more than 90 percent of the people were beginning farmers. Many of Minnesota's most prominent beginning family farmers continue to come from the Hmong American communities of the Twin Cities. About half of the vendors at the main St. Paul and Minneapolis farmers' markets are Hmong Americans, most of them beginning farmers. They grow and sell fruits, vegetables, roots, herbs, flowers, and traditional crops by the hundreds at other markets across the region. These days, FLAG attorneys work closely with perhaps 100 Hmong American farm families in a given year. There was great progress over the past year in helping the farmers successfully apply for federal programs, find and sell to new markets, and integrate risk management strategies into their operations. One example of the methods employed to assist the Hmong beginning farmer population can be seen in a farmer who attended the Immigrant and Minority Farmer conference. He was turning to farming after he and his wife both lost their jobs in the economic downturn. This farmer met FLAG and AAHWM staff at the conference. He learned about NAP through workshops. FLAG staff provided direct assistance to help him apply for NAP and, when he suffered losses, helped him file a notice of loss. AAHWM staff helped him locate land to rent. Through FLAG's partnership with The Minnesota Project, we connected him to several new direct markets, including the University of St. Thomas and a local church. We helped him create a marketing profile; an invoicing system; and helped him and the buyer at the university come to an understanding about terms of delivery. We also brokered a deal, between the farmer and the farmer/landowner he rents from, to tend her strawberry patch and split the profits from the sales. After attending FLAG's workshop on recordkeeping and learning how to measure his land, he measured the two-acre plot he was renting and learned it was only 1.5 acres. He approached the landlord and received a refund. He has become a leader among the many Hmong farmers who also rent from the same landlord and passes on his knowledge to them. He was selected to be on an advisory committee to help University of Minnesota extension staff conduct outreach and training to immigrant farmers on food safety. And, as of this month, he is now a member of FLAG's Board of Directors. PROJECT MODIFICATIONS: Nothing significant to report during this reporting period.

**IMPACT: 2010/09/01 TO 2011/08/31**

provided outreach, technical assistance, training, publications, counsel, translations, and transportation to 300+ immigrant farmers (70% beginning farmers). NOTE: All items listed below apply to beginning farmers: Change in knowledge: Taught hundreds of farmers, in groups and individually, about preparation and application for federal programs, leasing farmland, new marketing options, and risk management strategies. Change in knowledge: Several farmers now better understand



and address risk management after receiving legal assistance with leases, zoning issues, and labor and employment issues  
 Change in action: At least 7 Hmong farmers are registered at Wright, Sherburne, and Dakota County FSA offices and eligible for NAP payments to compensate for farm losses (1 recovered for 2010 losses; 3 will recover for 2011 losses).  
 Change in action: FLAG helped a Hmong farmer apply for and get a \$40,000 FSA operating loan; helped him collect and organize farm records; and provided language and cultural bridge with FSA. Change in conditions: Reflecting new potential Hmong farmers are selling fresh vegetables directly to at least 7 new markets (MN institutional buyers): Hastings school district purchased 2 deliveries of produce from a Hmong farmer (85 lbs. vegetables, 30 lbs. tomatoes); St. Paul restaurants sought supplies of Hmong greens, herbs, and winter squashes; a Hmong family has sold vegetables to Univ. of St. Thomas; another provided 224 lbs. vegetables and cooking lessons to Macalester College. Change in knowledge, actions, and conditions: With FLAG's outreach and training, a Wright County Hmong farm family now keeps USDA-ready records; applied for NAP coverage; received NAP payment after storm damage; obtained refund from land owner after learning how to measure land; and is now teaching other farmers about USDA programs. Change in conditions: Because of FLAG's outreach work in Eagan, MN, area's farmers are safer and less isolated from the community after farmers were threatened by a local resident. Program's original quantifiable goals (all items apply to beginning farmers): Train at least 25 farmers on risk management and loan programs each year. [Completed through year 2.] Distribute educational materials on credit and risk management to at least 100 farmers. [Completed.] Assist 5-10 new farmers each year in filing their crop acreage reports with FSA to become eligible for risk management programs. [Completed through year 2.] Assist at least 10 farmers through 12- to 18-month process of applying for disaster relief under 2008 Farm Bill. [Complete.] Assist 15 farmers with risk management or loan applications or some other appropriate risk management tool. [Completed.] Create tenants' rights and obligations legal educational materials. [Completed.] Provide training and information to at least 25 farmers each year on tenants' rights and obligations. [Ahead of schedule through year 2.] Distribute educational materials on tenants' rights and obligations to at least 100 farmers. [Completed.] Contribute to capacity-building of AAHWM by providing legal and technical training and support to staff. [Completed/ongoing.]

**PUBLICATIONS: 2010/09/01 TO 2011/08/31**

- . Krueger, Jill E. 2010. Fall Deadlines for Minnesota Farmers to Sign Up for NAP (Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance) Program
- . Xyooj, Hli. 2011. Deadlines for Minnesota Farmers to Sign Up for NAP (Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance) Program
- Stokes, Susan E. 2011. A new PowerPoint presentation for a workshop attended by approximately 47 immigrant and minority farmers highlighting legal and risk management aspects of leasing farmland; 45 more people downloaded copies from the FLAG website during the grant period.
- . Stokes, Susan E. 2011. A new PowerPoint presentation for a workshop attended by approximately 47 immigrant and minority farmers highlighting legal and risk management aspects of leasing farmland; 45 more people downloaded copies from the FLAG website during the grant period.

**PROGRESS: 2009/09/01 TO 2010/08/31**

OUTPUTS: \* Planning, logistics, and training for Fifth Immigrant and Minority Farmer Conference in St. Paul, with 242 attendees. Sample survey of farmer attendees: 92 percent beginning farmers. Approximately 45 farmers attended FLAG workshop on legal and risk management aspects of leasing farmland. \* Met at least monthly with the director and staff of partner, Association for the Advancement of Hmong Women in Minnesota (AAHWM). Agenda: collaboratively addressing issues facing Hmong beginning farmers; training AAHWM staff on farm programs. \* Through partnership with MN Farmers Union, assisted beginning and immigrant farmers in search for scarce farmland near homes and farmers' markets; found a least three landowners with multiple plots of land; negotiated leases on 22 acres for beginning Hmong farmers. \* Created new direct marketing opportunities to help Minnesota beginning and immigrant farmers diversify marketing operations beyond local farmers' markets. \* Worked closely with MN FSA offices, notably in Dakota County, to maximize Hmong farmers' participation in the new SURE program for 2008 losses. Arranged Hmong translation of SURE notification letters;

conducted outreach; canvassed farmers' markets with SURE flier; met at Hmong farmers' homes to organize and convert records to FSA spreadsheets; accompanied farmers to FSA office for language/technical assistance. Ten Hmong farmers applied for SURE payments with FLAG's assistance. \* Represented 45 Hmong, mostly beginning, farmers in Eagan, MN, after a neighbor made threats with a loaded shotgun. Worked with prosecutors; reviewed rights and safety protocols with farmers; requested police patrols; conducted outreach to community; filed restraining orders. \* Researched NAP and AGR site's potential for Hmong and beginning farmers; conducted outreach to individual Hmong farmers and partner organizations on NAP deadlines; provided transportation and translations; and helped 8 Hmong beginning farmers apply for NAP. \* Provided counsel for a beginning farmer appealing denial of a state license to store and distribute farm products. \* Conducted research and advised beginning CSA farmers on labor and employment laws regarding interns; currently expanding that work for immigrant farmers, notably on minimum wage and unemployment compensation, hoping to create a user's guide for MN's beginning and immigrant farmers. \* Conducted research and advised beginning immigrant farmers on forms of business entities for their direct marketing operations (selling to Chipotle). \* Near completion of new recordkeeping template for direct marketing farmers; peer review and pilot program set for next reporting period. \* Completed most of research and writing for an article for dairy farmers in distress; topics include disaster payments, crop insurance, credit access, milk check assignments, and loan restructuring. \* Provided brief advice and information to beginning farmers who contacted FLAG re: contracts, loan servicing, pricing at farmers markets, and RCS grants, and more. \* Conducted additional outreach to farmers' market farmers, at markets and by attending and presenting at a MN Farmers' Market Association conference.

**PARTICIPANTS:** Principal Investigators: Susan E. Stokes is a practicing attorney and has been FLAG's Executive Director since November 2005. She joined FLAG in January 2002 and became its Legal Director later that year. After leaving the Iron Range where she grew up, Susan received her B.A. degree from St. Olaf College (Northfield, MN) in 1984 and her J.D. degree from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1989. She is admitted to practice in numerous federal district and appellate courts, including the United States Supreme Court. Hli Xyooj joined FLAG in 2006 as the Hmong Community Outreach Coordinator and has since become a Staff Attorney as well. Hli has helped to forge contacts with the Hmong American farming community so FLAG may better serve Hmong farmers. Hli earned her undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1999 with majors in International Relations, Political Science, and Asian Studies, with a concentration in Southeast Asia. She graduated from Hamline University School of Law in 2007 (where she also obtained her Certificate in Dispute Resolution from the Dispute Resolution Institute) and completed her Master of Business Administration degree from Hamline University School of Business in December 2008.

**Partner Organizations/Collaborators:** The Association for the Advancement of Hmong Women in Minnesota (AAHWM) provides cultural services, education, and advocacy to address the evolving needs of Hmong women and their families. Today, the 30-year-old organization, based in St. Paul, Minnesota, helps families that are reclaiming their farming traditions. Land Stewardship Project (LSP) is a private, nonprofit organization founded in 1982 to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, to promote sustainable agriculture, and to develop sustainable communities. A significant portion of LSP's program work over the past decade has been to provide technical assistance and support to farmers who engage in direct marketing. LSP has done this through its Farm Beginnings program and through substantial outreach and direct support to its farmer members. Minnesota Food Association (MFA) was incorporated in 1981 to form a coalition of informed, connected, and activated urban and rural people who will work together to build a more sustainable food system. MFA's Big River Farms CSA is a practical demonstration working and training farm for the immigrant farmers in its farmer training program. Training and professional development: A portion of this grant is supporting a new position Farm Coordinator, at collaborating organization, AAHWM. FLAG is building long-term capacity in that position by providing training and technical assistance.

**TARGET AUDIENCES:** In the grant period, FLAG used formal education programs, workshops, and individual instruction and outreach to change and improve the knowledge, actions, and circumstances for a wide range of beginning and immigrant farmers. One quantifiable example was the 2010 Minority and Immigrant Farmer conference held in St. Paul, Minnesota. According to a survey of the conference participants: \* 91 percent of the farmers

ere Asian; 68 percent of the attendees were women. \* 92 percent of the farmers who responded to the evaluation questions had been farming fewer than 10 years. The majority of Minnesota's most prominent beginning family farmers continue to come from the Hmong American communities of the Twin Cities. About half of the vendors at the main St. Paul and Minneapolis farmers' markets are Hmong Americans, most of them beginning farmers. They grow and sell fruits, vegetables, roots, herbs, flowers, and traditional crops by the hundreds at other markets across the region. These days, FLAG attorneys work closely with perhaps 100 Hmong American farm families in a given year. This project's target audiences have hit a kind of economic ceiling. They have established farming practices, although usually as a second or third job. They have secured access to farmers' markets, although the income from them is unpredictable and profits are often miniscule. In 2008, the Census Bureau's American Community Survey reported that almost 30 percent of Minnesota's Hmong American residents live in poverty. According to the economic analyses we have conducted, on average, selling fruits and vegetables at a Twin Cities area farmers' market is paying beginning and immigrant farmers roughly 40 cents an hour. Example: One of the most successful St. Paul Hmong American farmers we have assisted grows flowers and vegetables on 22 acres of land on the edge of the Twin Cities. She is laboring to become an independent, full-time farmer. We assisted her to get what we believe was the first FSA operating loan for a Hmong farmer in Minnesota, and she repaid the loan ahead of schedule. Last year, her best year, she had gross sales of \$8,700 at farmers' markets. After expenses, she took home \$5,323, and she lost her home to foreclosure due to a questionable mortgage her family signed on to. We are helping her find land for next year. Her story is a classic example of the complexities Hmong farmers face. PROJECT MODIFICATIONS: Nothing significant to report during this reporting period.

**IMPACT:** 2009/09/01 TO 2010/08/31

FLAG provided outreach, technical assistance, training, publications, counsel, translations, and some transportation to more than 350 immigrant farmers; approximately 70 percent were beginning farmers. Those services created changes in knowledge, actions, and conditions through activities ranging from brief legal assistance to hours of individual legal work. Change in knowledge: Hundreds of beginning immigrant farmers, in groups and individually, learned from FLAG staff about preparation and application for federal programs, land leasing, new marketing options, and a broad range of risk management strategies. \* Change in action: At least 10 Hmong farmers - at least half of whom are beginning farmers - are in the registry at the Dakota County FSA office, eligible to receive SURE payments to compensate for their losses in a July 2008 storm. \* Change in conditions: Buyers from 26 schools expressed interest in buying fresh vegetables directly from Hmong farmers for the school year ahead. In this pilot year, four Hmong farmers sold nearly 400 pounds of produce (including 90 pounds of broccoli) in one week directly to schools. \* Change in knowledge and actions: An important breakthrough on USDA's Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage for Hmong farmers. Eight farmers applied successfully. Four of the farmers suffered substantial crop losses this year, filed notices of loss with FSA, and are now in the claims process. The NAP payment will likely help one Hmong farm family keep a roof over their heads this winter. \* Change in knowledge and actions: Because of work on leases, seven beginning Hmong farm families signed a written lease, all for the first time. \* Change in conditions: Because of FLAG's outreach work in Eagan, MN, after beginning immigrant farmers were threatened by a local resident, all farmers in the area are now less isolated from the community around them. The program's original quantifiable goals: 1) Train at least 25 beginning and immigrant farmers on federal risk management and loan programs each year. [Completed.] 2) Distribute educational materials on credit and risk management to at least 100 beginning and immigrant farmers. [Completed.] 3) Assist 5 - 10 new immigrant farmers each year in filing their crop acreage reports with FSA to become eligible for risk management programs. [Completed for year 1.] 4) Assist at least 10 immigrant farmers through the 12- to 18-month process of applying for disaster relief under the 2008 Farm Bill. [Ahead of schedule.] 5) Assist 15 beginning or immigrant farmers with risk management or loan applications or some other appropriate risk management tool. [Ahead of schedule.] 6) Create tenants' rights and obligations legal educational materials. [Underway.] 7) Provide training and information to at least 25 immigrant farmers each year regarding tenants' rights and obligations. [Ahead of schedule for year 1.] 8) Distribute educational materials regarding

tenants' rights and obligations to at least 100 immigrant farmers. [Completed.] 9) Contribute to capacity-building of AAHWM by providing legal and technical training and support to its staff. [Completed and ongoing.]

**PUBLICATIONS: 2009/09/01 TO 2010/08/31**

. Krueger, Jill 2010. A two-page leaflet on the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payment Program (SURE), the new USDA program created by the 2008 Farm Bill, for farmers who suffered crop losses back to 2008, for training with Dakota County (Minnesota) farmers whose crops were severely damaged by storms in July 2008. Roughly 50 paper copies of the leaflet were distributed, and 345 people have downloaded it from our website.

. Xyooj, Hli 2010. A template, nearing completion, for farm production and financial recordkeeping to meet the needs of immigrant farmers applying for federal programs and to improve business planning. The template will be available later this fall for peer review, pilot usage, and possibly for workshops/trainings.

. Stokes, Susan E. 2010. A PowerPoint presentation prepared for a workshop attended by approximately 45 immigrant and minority farmers highlighting legal and risk management aspects of leasing farmland; 45 more people downloaded copies from the FLAG website during the grant period.

. Vang, Ly, and Stokes, Susan E., June 30, 2010, Minneapolis Star Tribune. FLAG and collaborator AAHWM wrote a newspaper commentary on the issue of Hmong farmers and their reception in suburban and exurban communities.

. Stokes, Susan E. 2010. A two-page leaflet, Selling Directly to Schools: Tips for Farmers, presented and distributed to farmers at a public meeting in Scott County, Minnesota.

. Krueger, Jill and Krub, Karen 2010. A booklet, Tools for Dairy Farmers in Tough Economic Times, in final production, discusses federal disaster programs; crop insurance and NAP; credit access; milk check assignments; loan restructuring; bankruptcy; strategies to restore positive cash flow; and organic certification and contracts. The article will be important to beginning dairy farmers to recognize the potential downsides of supply contracts and assignments.